

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5423

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8510

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: POLICE ARRESTS AND MILITARY MALAISE

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS REPORTS TO WHICH IT NOW PREPARED GIVE CREDENCE THAT ETHIOPIAN POLICE COMMISSIONER GENERAL BERHANE TEFERA WAS DETAINED BY THIRD DIVISION TROOPS OR COMMANDO POLICE IN HARAR ON JULY 12 WHILE VISITING PROVINCE WHITH PMAC CHAIRMAN. HE WAS APPARENTLY DETAINED FOR APPROXIMATELY FOUR HOURS AND RELEASED. PURPOSE OF ARREST WAS TO DRAMATIZE DISSIDENTS' DEMANDS,

IMMEDIATE RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE, NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT TO ERITREAN PROBLEM AND MODIFICATION OF LAND REFORM PROCLAMATION TO RESTORE LAND GRANTS TO RETIRING MILITARY. BIRITISH EMBASSY BELIEVES ARREST WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SHOOT-OUT BETWEEN RIVAL FACTIONS OF MILITARY UNITS SUPPORTING OPPOSING THE MOVE.

2. EMBASSY NOW IN RECEIPT OF SEVERAL REPORTS BELIEVED RELIABLE THAT VICE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE BG SHAWUL ZELEKA, ASSIST. COM. BG DEMMELASH, TWO POLICE COLONELS, INCLUDING THE SHOA COMMISSIONER
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OF POLICE YISITILA GOSSE, ONE MAJOR, ONE LIEUTENANT AND SEVERAL

POLICE NCOS WERE ARRESTED EVENING OF JULY 15- TWELVE MEN IN ALL. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT ABOVE NAMED WERE ARRESTED FOR INTRIGUING AGAINST POLICE COMMISSIONER AND LEAKING INFORMATION TO HARARGHE DISSIDENTS WHICH CAUSED LATTER TO ARREST GENERAL BERHANE. OTHER SOURCES ASSERT THAT SHAWUL WANTED COMMISSIONER OUT OF THE WAY TO FACILITATE EXECUTION HIS OWN GROUPS' ALLEGED COUP PLANS. SOURCE OF FOREGOING IS WELL PLACED BUT NEW.

3. FONMIN INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT PMAC CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTE WOULD BE TRAVELING TO ASMARA ON JULY 16 OR 17 THIS CONCIDES WITH OTHER REPORTS EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED THAT CHAIRMAN WOULD BE ARRESTED WHEN HE TRAVELED TO ASMARA, ALONG WITH ERITREAN MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL GETACHEW AND SECOND DIVISION COMMANDER GENERAL WORKU. ARRESTS REPORTEDLY WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY SECOND DIVISION TROOPS TO ENFORCE COMPLIANCE WITH THEIR DEMANDS (SAME AS PARA ONE ABOVE).

4. PMAC HELD SPECIAL MEETING 12 AND 13 JULY TO DISCUSS WHAT ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN IN REGARD TO POLICE PROBLEM. IT WAS DECIDED THAT SIX POLICE OFFICERS REPRESENTED ON THE DIRG WOULD BE MOVED AND NOT REPLACED SINCE THEY DID NOT WARN PMAC OF DISSENSION WITHIN POLICE.

5. COMMENT: THESE REPORTS CONVERGE WITH OTHER REPORTS OF INCREASING DISCONTENT AMONG UP-COUNTRY MILITARY UNITS. IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT TEMPORARILY DETAINING LEADERS TO DRAMATIZE A POINT OF VIEW IS A TIME-HONORED PRACTICE OF ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. ATTEMPT TO REMOVE POLICE REPRESENTATIVES FROM DIRG, IF IT PROCEEDS, COULD CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS AS POLICE ARE MORE COHESIVE AND BETTER ORGANIZED THAN MANY MILITARY UNITS. MOREOVER THERE ARE FORTY THOUSAND POLICE- AND THEY HAVE GUNS.
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